

## Testimony before the Housing Committee

February 28, 2013

### **S.B. No. 952 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LANDLORDS AND TENANTS REGARDING BED BUG INFESTATION.**

**Barbara Albert**

Good evening members of the Housing Committee. My name is Barbara Albert, registered voter, renter in Hartford, multiply medically challenged, including mental illnesses. I'm on Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security Disability. I was employable before illnesses became too much. I do volunteer work when able. I am also an activist and advocate for Human Rights, mostly for mental health rights and rights for the disadvantaged no matter what age.

Illness and poverty do not discriminate. According to the Brookings Institute, I am one of more than 30% of Hartford residents "living" under the Federal Poverty Level according to the U.S. Dept of Housing and Urban Development 2012 Fiscal Year Program. I am one of several million very low-income American renters with "worst case needs", meaning that I am paying more than 50% of my income for rent and living in severely inadequate housing. The 2010 Census reports Hartford as the poorest city in the richest state. I apply for rental assistance whenever there is an opportunity. Still nothing.

This is my testimony regarding ***Raised Bill No. 952, An Act Concerning the Rights and Responsibilities of Landlords and Tenants Regarding Bed Bug Infestation.***

Two sessions ago, I submitted a "Stephen King" type testimony to the Public Health Committee concerning bed bug infestation since at least 2009, where I've been renting since 1995. My apartment/building has significant problems with bedbugs. I have needed to notify the landlord on several occasions. A few times the response from the office that I received was "are you sure they are bed bugs", and "do you want to wait until there are more?" I hesitated before answering because each time the apartment is sprayed, and I vacate for more than the requested time, I become more and more ill due to the chemicals. I have **Multiple Chemical Sensitivities** and this very much has been increasingly detrimental to my health and caused altered mental status. I've paid my rent into Housing Court to attempt compliance from the landlord's with our lease/contract only to see the landlord get the rent anyway and I am still seeing bedbugs by the hallway door which must come in on the bottom of my shoes. Landlords need to be held accountable in writing as well as tenants. I put a petition together with as many other tenants' signatures to request compliance. I've got Doctor's letters and a serious medical history with allergies and sensitivities documented.

I support most of bill 952, which is exactly the same as last year's bill 190. However, I thought there was supposed to be a work group to make decisions. Something different needs to be done.

It is an undue burden for me to keep paying for this when it's in our lease that extermination is part of building and grounds maintenance. I know landlords who don't follow current municipal codes. How can I be sure that these landlords will follow this law? I see myself trapped here and dying. What are people like me supposed to do? I'm still dropping things and feel like I have scramble eggs for brains since the last extermination on Dec 9, 2011.

***"Of all the preposterous assumptions of humanity over humanity, nothing exceeds the criticisms made on the habits of the poor, by most of the well housed, well-warmed, and well-fed."*** Herman Melville

And why isn't there some creature in the food chain that eats these little blood suckers?

Thank you for listening.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Albert